OHIO CAPITAL JOURNAL

As federal teen pregnancy prevention grants get cut, efforts in Ohio try to keep helping

BY **SUSAN TEBBEN** - JULY 28, 2026 4:00 AM

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The federal government is taking swipes at funding for teen pregnancy prevention, causing concerns in Ohio and elsewhere as advocates attempt to keep helping teens.

The cuts are also bringing about discussion when it comes to teens who are already parents.

Rosemary Oglesby-Henry was a teen mom herself three decades ago, and from what she's seen, not a lot has changed in terms of the perception of teen pregnancy.

"I chose to parent, and when I chose to parent there were no resources to teach me how to be a mother," she told the Capital Journal.

In 2016, Oglesby-Henry founded Rosemary's Babies Company, a Cincinnati-based nonprofit aimed at helping teen parents learn not only parenting skills, but also how to reach educational goals, gain workforce skills, and delay having more children.

The founder and CEO hopes to be part of the supports that might not be as needed down the road.

“Basically saying okay, we understand you have a child, but … you can still go back to school, you can wait until you build your family to have another child, and in that way you’re getting back on target so that you’re not dependent on the government, and you don’t end up on that economic cliff, especially our young girls” she said.

Rosemary’s Babies is a donor-based nonprofit that also receives state funding, something that she said is hard to get in the area of teen pregnancy support, but means the most when it comes to bolstering a population that is often weighed down by trauma, abuse, and a lack of other supports, including sex education.

“It helps to reduce the stigma, so that organizations like my own can now seek out support in saying, ‘I don’t promote teen pregnancy, but once these young people have these children, we need to help them before they get caught up in the system,” Oglesby-Henry said.

The U.S. Health and Human Services agency recently announced a plan to cancel 53 of 67 grants meant for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, amounting to about $68 million in eliminated funding.

Stateline reported that President Donald Trump took a similar action in his first term, changing grant funding for more than 80 recipients, before a judge stopped the action, ruling in favor of legal advocacy group Democracy Forward in a lawsuit claiming agency regulations violations.

The most recent actions are also the subject of a lawsuit, with Democracy Forward again among the parties suing the Trump administration to stop the cuts.

Nationwide Children’s Hospital’s research institute was named as one of the federal grant recipients between 2020 to 2023, receiving more than $860,000 for a program called “Changing the Landscape for Adolescent Health Equity and Access in Central Ohio,” according to the HHS website.

Representatives for the hospital were unavailable for comment.

Nationwide Children’s still houses a Teen and Pregnant Program, which provides prenatal and postpartum care for pregnant women up to age 21.

According to the program’s website, the Teen Pregnancy Clinic allows pregnant individuals to meet with medical professionals, participate in group meetings, learn about infant care and sign up for public programs including federal food assistance, and receive education on birth control for the future.

According to the Health and Human Services agency's own data in an objective it calls "Healthy People 2030," babies born to teen mothers "are more likely to be premature, have a low birth weight, and even to die."

"Having a baby can also negatively impact teen mothers' health and their educational and job opportunities," the HHS data states. "Although teen pregnancy and birth rates have gone down in recent years, disparities by race/ethnicity remain."

The department also states "evidence shows that a variety of outreach and educational programs can help reduce teen pregnancies."

State data from 2024 showed 69 babies born in Ohio to mothers who were younger than 15, more than 1,300 who were born to individuals aged 15 to 17, and nearly 4,000 who were born to mothers who were 18 to 19 years old.

The most recent state data is still considered preliminary, according to the Ohio Department of Health's database, but 2025 numbers showed 52 children born to Ohioans younger than 15, and more than 1,000 born to children between the ages of 15 and 17. Those aged 18 to 19 represented more than 3,700 births in 2025.

The CDC's most recent data on teen births is from 2024. Ohio's teen birth rate in that year was 14 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19, down slightly from the year before, when it was 14.6 per 1,000 female Ohioans.

Funding related to teen pregnancy is also part of state grant efforts, particularly through the program established by Gov. Mike DeWine, called the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

The money historically comes from federal and state contributions to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF).

The Ohio General Assembly's most recent operating budget allowed up to $26.8 million for the governor's office initiatives over 2026 and 2027.

A spokesperson for DeWine did not specifically comment when asked about the cuts to federal teen pregnancy prevention programs, but said the governor's office and the state Office of Budget and Management "continuously monitor federal funding decisions throughout the year."

The most recent executive order from DeWine directing TANF dollars for 2026 and 2027 said one of the purposes of the TANF program was to "prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies."

Following the most recent cuts, HHS put out new grant programs, called "Replicating Effective Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs," and "Rigorous Impact Evaluation of Programs to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and Achieve Optimal Health," according to the agency's website.

The Trump administration also plans to put money toward abstinence education and an emphasis on marriage, with grant application language similar to concepts supported by conservative groups, which discourage contraception, among other ideas.

Sex education and the 'success sequence'

The state has been criticized for lacking a standardized sex education program over the years, which advocates say contributes to the teen pregnancy rate.

The sex education advocacy group SIECUS gave Ohio a failing grade in a national ranking of state sex ed programs.

The group decried the newest development in the state's sex education program, called the "success sequence," which requires school to teach students that they should graduate high school, get a job, and get married, consecutively, before having a baby.

Under the new law, the "success sequence" would be a graduation requirement.

A 2021 study commissioned by the federal Health and Human Services agency found that though completing high school, getting a full-time job, and getting married did make people less likely to experience poverty, the order of events was not necessarily important.

"For the association between milestones and economic self-sufficiency at ages 35-40, our results suggest that the individual milestones, regardless of sequence, appear to be the main factors associated with economic outcomes in adulthood," the study stated.

For Oglesby-Henry, the information provided through the "success sequence" and other measures can be helpful, even just as a conversation starter.

"It teaches about economics and the impact that happens when we make these decisions, and it teaches about consequences," she said.

But there still needs to be lessons at higher levels about the consequences of promoting pregnancy without providing the support that's needed.

"As this administration is pushing the need for families to have more babies and things such as that, we have to evaluate, okay, can people afford daycare if we're cutting benefits, can people afford housing," Oglesby-Henry said.

Having just opened Holloway House for housing support, workforce training, and other

programs for teen parents, the founder of Rosemary's Babies is attempting to strike at an increase in homelessness among young mothers as well, making funding even more important.

"We're looking at how can we continue to assist these families, where, if we get them through our program, we get the training that this administration is (encouraging) ... but when they complete all of that, they can't afford housing, or they can't still afford to live," Oglesby-Henry said.

Support for teens who are pregnant and prevention for the future isn't easily funded, she said, but education and the money to continue that education will bring about more results.

"Prevention always costs less than the actual epidemic or the actual problem," according to Oglesby-Henry.